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SERMON 12.

LITERALLY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH,

AS ORIGINALLY PREACHED IN THE

MALAYALIM LANGUAGE,

On the 3rd of January 1843,

AT THE

OPENING OF A NEW CHURCH

IN CONNEXION WITH THE

CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY,

AT PALLAM, TRAVANCORE.

BY THE

REV. JOSEPH PEET,

MAVELICARA.

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SERMON

LITERALLY TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

SERMON

AS ORIGINALLY DELIVERED IN THE

MALAYALIM LANGUAGE

ON THE 24th of January 1818

AT THE

OPENING OF A NEW CHURCH

IN CONNECTION WITH THE

CHURCH MISSIONARY SOCIETY



COTTAYAM

Printed at the Church Mission Press, at the expense of the Society, in the year 1818.

SERMON.

ROMANS XIV, 17.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS NOT MEAT AND DRINK ; BUT RIGHTEOUSNESS, AND PEACE, AND JOY IN THE HOLY GHOST.

DEAR Brethren and friends! having, by God's good aid, erected another house to the honour of his name, and prepared it for the celebration of his worship; we have called you together to unite with us to praise Him for his merciful help, and to invoke his heavenly benediction upon this new attempt to glorify our Redeemer, and convey the knowledge of his Salvation to the Multitudes in this neighbourhood, who are sitting in the region and shadow of death.

But some, unacquainted with the nature of true religion, may ask why trouble men's minds about these subjects? If each walk according to his own religious customs will it not be enough? Could, or would not the Almighty effect the conversion of the people of this land

if He willed them to become Christians? My dear friends! permit me in reply to assure you, that these questions are vain; that such sentiments are founded in error, are dangerous to the soul, and ought therefore to be rejected. Whenever you think or speak of the great Supreme, be advised to do it with the most profound reverence, and humility; when you converse, at any time, or on any subject, be careful not to take his holy name in vain, or refer to it in a light, irreverent manner. As to what the Almighty can, or cannot do it behoves not us to enquire; the attempt to overstep the limits his wisdom hath prescribed to us, were arrogance that will be sure to terminate in shame and self-confusion. With regard however to this life we know, a little, how the Almighty is pleased to conduct our affairs, and, by analogy, we may conclude what his will is with respect, to our spiritual concerns. If it seemed good to the Lord, He could give us food, raiment, and every thing required for this life, without our labour, and without our care; but He has seen fit to act otherwise. He has graciously given us the means to provide for our own bodily necessities, and reason to teach us how to use those means aright; and it is only by the proper use of means

that our worldly affairs can prosper. Suppose an individual, depending upon the cultivation of his land for his earthly support, were to argue thus; the Almighty can, if He please, provide for my temporal necessities, without my labour, therefore I will neither sow nor reap: what would be the consequence? The man would starve and die; not because the Almighty could not save him without his effort, but because he neglected to use the means appointed for the preservation of his health and life: and so it is, we might reasonably conclude, with regard to our eternal affairs: but, my friends, we are not left to mere conjecture on this all important subject; the Great Supreme, in the multitude of his mercies, hath revealed his will to men, by which they may learn what their duty is toward him, and in what consists their present and eternal bliss. That sacred will of God of which I speak is contained in the Christian *Védam*. This some of you will deny. Remember, however, *your denial cannot alter the nature of facts*. We firmly maintain, and as confidently declare to the whole world, that Christianity is true;—that we have indubitable evidence to prove the Christian Scripture to be worthy of God, and that it was given by him for the instruction, and guidance of all men;

and, Sirs, upon the authority, and in the language of that Book, we say to our heathen neighbours, “Him whom ye ignorantly worship we declare unto you,—that you ought not to think the Godhead is like unto Gold, or Silver, or Stone, graven by art and man’s device;—that the times of this ignorance God winked at, but now commandeth all men every where to repent, because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness.” Now, Sirs! that you may learn to know the true God aright, we, without reviling your religion, or, in any way, despising you, invite you, as friends, to come to this Sacred House to hear us explain the Scriptures, and, like wise men, judge what is truth, and then embrace it.

To this the Syrians, and persons of a similar class, may reply; all that has been advanced is true and perfectly applicable to the heathen; but in a country where there are already so many churches, why, they ask, erect more? Why make divisions among the Christians here? To such we say, we come among you, not to create divisions, but to preach the Gospel to the heathen, and with an earnest wish to be instrumental in raising you from your fallen state; we say, with all sincerity in the language of St. Paul, *we come not to seek yours but you.*

Brethren! the preacher has resided among you for about ten years, and some of his brethren, now present, for more than twenty years. You know what our conduct has been; and what we teach; we have never, as the Papists did when they first came among you, put* Gold into your Children's bread, nor used any deceitful arts in order to beguile you: we have never, as they did, burnt your valuable books, but that you might learn, and become wise, have printed and given you *gratis* such works as were saved from destruction; we have never,—as they did,—murdered your Metrans, stolen your Churches, nor oppressed you, nor your forefathers in any way: but, constrained by the love of Christ, and lamenting your spiritually miserable condition, we have come to weep over you—to pray for you—and advise with you about those things which concern the glory of our Saviour and the welfare of your immortal Souls. Brethren! you have your Redeemer's commands written in your own language,—and upon the authority of Christ's words we tell you that the Syrians and similar classes in this land have erred from the faith, and are walking in opposition to the will of God.

* This alludes to their practice of having made small cakes in each of which was inserted a Gold *Fanam* for the purpose of enticing away the Syrian children.

Is it then to cause dissension among you to tell you the truth? Brethren if there be division, it is because there is a difference between us: but the *essential* difference between us has been caused by you: living among heathen you have learned their bad customs,—and have also been corrupted by the unscriptural doctrines, and evil practices of the followers of the pope; and the consequence is, that your faith and practice are in many respects, contrary to the word of God. Examine for yourselves, brethren, and you will find that while the Bible declares that “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost:” the Syrian, like the Romish, Church declares and teaches that the kingdom of God *is* meat and drink, and *not* righteousness, *nor* peace, *nor* joy in the Holy Ghost. The cause, then, of the difference between us, is your departure from the faith of Christ. We ask you therefore to remove the ground of dissension, and become Christians as your forefathers were; and then we shall be of one mind, for Christ’s people all agree in *essentials*, they are one in Spirit, one in faith,—they all obey the same Saviour, and at last they will all enjoy the same eternal rest in Christ. Now, Brethren, that we may understand

these things the better, I will endeavour to elucidate the meaning of our text in which the nature of Christianity is pointed out in a concise but satisfactory manner. And may the Holy Spirit so assist us to speak and hear that the name of our God may be glorified, and our immortal souls benefited for Christ's sake. Amen!

First, I will endeavour to show the meaning of the phrase "kingdom of God" in the sense in which it is used in the text.

Secondly, Point out a few of the mistakes which some people make with respect to this kingdom.

Thirdly, Show briefly in what the "kingdom of God," here spoken of, consists.

Lastly, Close with one or two practical observations that may be suggested by the preceding discourse.

I. I will endeavour to show the meaning of the phrase "Kingdom of God" in the sense in which it is used in the text.

About six hundred years before Christ appeared on earth, the Almighty revealed to the King of Babylon, in a dream, many important events that were to take place; and the pro-

phet Daniel, by the Holy Spirit's assistance, in explaining those matters foretold that four great kingdoms should arise, and that then the God of heaven would establish a power and dominion upon earth which should continue for ever: but because the prophet spake of the dominion which the Almighty purposed to establish in the earth in connexion with the four great earthly kingdoms, he designated it "the kingdom of God." Now the Jews, who were God's chosen people before the coming of the Messiah, being acquainted with the writings of Daniel, understood that Prophecy as referring to Christ and the Christian religion. Therefore it was, when John the Baptist exhorted the Jews to repentance on the ground of this "kingdom of heaven" being at hand, that they readily came to him to be baptized into the faith of the Messiah whom they then expected: for the same cause also, when teaching his disciples to pray for the extension of the true religion, Christ commanded, "when ye pray, say, Thy kingdom come." Now, my brethren, a little reflection will show us that the religion taught by our blessed Redeemer is most appropriately denominated "the kingdom of God," inasmuch as the glorious plan of Salvation developed by it, was predetermined in heaven,—and because

this religion is agreeable to the will of God the Father,—because it was founded in the blood of God the Son,—because the benefits which accrue to men, through it, are applied by God the Holy Ghost,—because it unites men to God in this world, and because it fits them to dwell with him in the world to come. By the expression “kingdom of God” in our text, therefore, we are to understand the Christian religion, and the whole verse may be paraphrased thus; the Christian religion is not meat and drink but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.

II. I purpose to point out a few of the mistakes which *some* people make respecting this kingdom.

At the time the Holy Apostle wrote his Epistle to the Romans there were some in that Church who had been converted from Judaism, and others from among the heathen; but, in consequence of retaining old prejudices, or through the influence of false teachers some difference of opinion, on certain subjects, arose among them. Some maintained that such and such days should be kept holy;—and others, that they ought to abstain from certain meats: to prevent disputes on these and similar subjects, and to teach the Church how to act in

like circumstances, were the reasons why the Apostle wrote on the subject with which stand connected the words of our text. He told them, in effect, that such of their number as regarded particular days,—abstained from certain meats, etc., were but weak Christians; nevertheless they were Christians and faithful, because like the other Christians, in that Church, they firmly held all the essential doctrines of the Christian religion. But because they were Christian brethren, the Apostle directed the stronger Christians to bear with their infirmities, and receive them with love; at the same time, to prevent any mistake respecting the nature of true religion, he adds “the kingdom of God is not meat and drink;” that is, Christianity does not consist in the mere performance, or non-observance, of outward rights or ceremonies, of any kind. These words of the Apostle, brethren, as well as many similar expressions in the word of God, are applicable to every outward rite, that may have, or may be supposed to have, reference to the Christian religion respecting which but too many fall into grievous mistakes:—for example, some will go to church once or twice in the year, to make confession and “See mass,” and think that enough to obtain Salvation. Some will oc-

asionally give of their Substance to the needy, and hold that a sufficient compensation for neglecting the other duties of the Christian religion. Others will frequently go to Church, repeat their prayers, and perform many outward acts of worship, and then suppose they have done all that is required to save their immortal souls. Many in this land imagine that by fasting on stated days, and making vows to saints, they will obtain the favour of God and procure the forgiveness of their Sins:—and thus in numberless ways people err respecting the truth;—they mistake the shadow for the substance—the outward dress for the man, and so destroy their own immortal Souls. These remarks apply to all external religious observances, even to the most important: thus of Baptism,—if it be confined to the mere outward act, it is not the real sacrament as appointed by Christ, but a useless ceremony; for as the apostle says of circumcision, which was formerly used instead of Baptism, “he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh:” so it may be said of Baptism, he is not a Christian who is one outwardly; neither is that baptism which consists in a mere outward ceremony. It is not, brethren, to be inferred from all this

that religious rites are here decried as unnecessary. Some are necessary, for they were instituted by Christ himself;—others, that are appointed by the Church, provided they be consistent with the word of God, are proper, because the Apostle directs *all things in the Church, to be done decently and in order*. It may be well sometimes to fast;—it is right to give alms to the poor, and to do good to all men; and whatever we do will be lawful and right, provided, it be done to glorify God, and be agreeable to his sacred commands. But remember, brethren, we do not become Christians by the performance of outward actions; these are but so many outward signs and witnesses that we are already Christians; and when from love to God, and obedience to his will, we perform good works, the ability proceeds from the spirit of Christ which dwells within us. If however we imagine that, by any good works of our own, we can procure forgiveness of sin; or that Christianity consists in the mere performance of outward duties, we deceive ourselves—are ignorant of the requirements of Christianity—and, if the grace of God do not prevent, shall by such errors ruin our souls for ever.

III. I proceed to show briefly in what

the kingdom of God, here spoken of, consists.

The Apostle tells us that “the kingdom of God, is righteousness.” Christianity consists essentially in righteousness. When an individual becomes a true Christian a great change takes place in his spiritual condition; so great is that change that in Scripture it is represented under the figure of a new creation. “If any man,” says the Apostle, “be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new:” his views of sin—of God—of his own duty—of heaven are quite different from what they were before; and because he now endeavours to think and act agreeable to the will of the Almighty, the Scriptures pronounce him righteous; his sins are forgiven through Christ, and being accepted in him, he is accounted before God as free from guilt—he is received into God’s favour—adopted into his family, and becomes an heir of heaven. You perceive, brethren, that Christianity is very different from what most in this land suppose. It does not consist in mere outward ceremonies, nor yet in a bare assent to the truth; but in a new and spiritual nature implanted in the soul, which energizes and produces in it the fruits of righteousness to the praise and glory of God.

Again, the kingdom of God, or the Christian religion, is in our text, also termed "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost." My brethren, on these important topics I must be very brief, because there are but few of you can follow me. The holy Apostle in the above words shows us a little of the length, breadth, depth, and height of Christianity; but these can be perceived and appreciated only by the real Christian; for true it is, as the apostle tells us in the 1 Cor. ii. 14., that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are Spiritually discerned." Be assured however by the testimony of God's word, and by the experience of true Christians, that the religion of Christ, rightly received, produces a peace, a comfort, and a joy that worldly men cannot understand. But peace and joy, brethren, are the effects of righteousness; for as the Apostle tells us, in the 5th chap. of the Romans, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this Grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." My dear Christian brethren, you who are really united to Christ, and strive to keep his holy com-

mands; call to mind *Him* who said "Peace I leave with you: my peace I give unto you." Christian brethren, the peace of God in Christ is your inheritance, and you are privileged to enjoy communion with him. Strive, I beseech you, to obtain more peace and more joy,—be careful to study and understand the word of God,—seek to become more diligent followers of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the peace of God, which is beyond the comprehension of the ungodly, will keep your minds fixed upon him, and the blessing of God, which produceth comfort and joy, will remain with you in this world and for ever.

IV. I shall now submit a few practical observations as suggested by the foregoing subject.

1st. My friends, allow me to ask, are you real Christians? this remember, is an all-important question. To help you to know your own spiritual state, let us inquire how men become true Christians: and if in the inquiry, you examine and compare your own views and conduct, you will be enabled to ascertain what your true condition is in the sight of God.

Men become Christians by the influences of God the Holy Spirit. As before noticed, God

the Holy Spirit implants a new and living seed or nature in the hearts of sinners, by means of which the eyes of their understanding become enlightened,—they see their own wretched condition,—they feel they have sinned against God and their own souls,—that they have become the slaves of Satan, and the heirs of eternal misery. Sin then becomes grievous in their sight, and as an insupportable burden upon their souls,—they hear God's broken law, as it were in sounds more fearful than the pealing thunder, calling down upon them vengeance for their crimes,—they see the gulf of eternal misery yawning beneath their feet, and, though they look for deliverance in many ways they find neither safety, comfort, nor rest in any. When the Spirit of God hath thus taught men that of themselves they are lost, and cannot be saved by human, or even angelic aid; He then, through the word of God or similar means, teaches them respecting redemption through Christ; by which they learn that Christ is able and willing to save all them that come to God through him. By the Holy Spirit's aid they are also assisted to believe in Christ with the whole heart and to trust in him alone for eternal salvation. When they pray, Christ is their only Mediator, and they strive to become his disci-

ples and obey his holy commands. Men and Brethren, have you thus learned to know Christ? Renouncing your own righteousness do you depend upon Christ alone, and are you striving to become his real followers? Deceive not yourselves. If the Spirit of Christ dwell not in you, *know* that you are yet in your sins, and are going to destruction. Pray earnestly I entreat you to God, in Christ's name and for Christ's sake, that He would grant you the Holy Spirit's aid to show you what is truth and incline your hearts to embrace it.

2nd. As for you my Christian Brethren, learn from the foregoing subject, not to be beguiled from the simplicity of the Gospel by the folly, craft, or malice of those who are striving to bring Christ's people into spiritual bondage. Many there are at this time, who go up and down the world attempting to corrupt the truth in order to draw men's minds from the simplicity of the faith, and bring them under the bondage of vain ceremonies: and if the unlearned among my Christian Brethren take not care, they may be ensnared by their cunning words and plausible speech. Of these unhappy individuals some will argue thus; 'We allow indeed that the Bible is the word of God and contains all knowledge necessary for salva-

tion;’ but *they add*, ‘it is very difficult to be understood, and as none but learned and skilful teachers can comprehend it aright, the people ought to submit to their instruction, and fully allow all their explanations of it.’ Now brethren this advice sounds well, and the more so because it is mixed up with truth; but there is in it also much that is false and dangerous to men’s souls. It is indeed manifestly true that ministers and teachers ought to be capable of instructing their people in the word of God: it is also true, as the apostle tells us, that there are things in the Scripture hard to be understood; *but remember all the knowledge essential to salvation, is written so plainly in the Bible that even a child may understand it*:—remember also that the Almighty gave the Scriptures for all men;—that Christ commanded to “search the Scriptures;” and that Paul commended the people of a certain place because they examined the Scriptures. Moreover Brethren, unless you become acquainted with the word of God for yourselves, how can you tell whether your ministers teach you the truth or not? Of this we have a fearful example in this land. The Roman and Syrian priests are in the habit of teaching their parishioners a different Gospel from that taught in the Scripture;

and on account of their ignorance and superstitious veneration for their clergy, the people believe all that is taught them, and in consequence, live and die in error and sin. Besides, brethren, keeping the laity in ignorance, as in the case of the Syrian church, is but too often the priest's gain. They have no other means of procuring a living but by blinding and deceiving their people, and are therefore systematically opposed to scriptural instruction. This, brethren, is a great evil, but it is a legitimate and, when fully followed out, a never failing consequence of making ministers wholly dependant upon their congregations for temporal support. But to make merchandise of men's souls is, to say the least, a most unspeakably fearful evil; and that you, brethren, may not be deceived do not forsake the Scriptures, but read them daily, and pray that the Holy Spirit may assist you more and more to understand and obey them.

Again; others, of the above-mentioned class, will tell you that the ancient church instituted many ceremonies and feast days which ought therefore to be observed in our times; and that such and such Saints wrote many things which should be received by us, because they, living nearer the times of the apostles than we do,

must be necessarily better acquainted with the particulars of the ancient faith and practice. Brethren, this reasoning may appear specious, but it is unsound; for as regards ceremonies, it is to be observed, they are but the dress of religion, and to alter or remove them may at times be harmless and even necessary; for example, the ancient church in the Apostle's days instituted and was in the habit of observing a ceremony termed "a feast of charity;" but having found that it might occasion evil, the church in the following times abolished it, and at present such a ceremony is not practiced in any church.

Again; other ancient churches on account of the ignorance of the people instituted or tolerated many rites, as burning incense, etc., borrowed in most cases from Jewish or heathen ceremonies; but when in course of time the people became more enlightened many of those observances fell into disuse and now to revive and practice them would, to use the mildest term, be folly; for, as the Apostle Paul says of outward rites, "the kingdom of God" or the Christian religion consisteth not "in meat and drink." "God is a spirit" and unless we worship him in spirit and in truth our religion will be vain, and all our ceremonies useless.

With regard to the writings of the Fathers;

to say that because they lived nearer the times of the Apostles than we, therefore they must know more of the real doctrines of Christianity, is a proposition by no means necessarily true; and with respect to some of the ages after the Apostle's there is every reason to believe it false. We know by indubitable testimony that after the times of the Apostle's the Church by degrees became corrupt;—we know also that learning declined;—that both priests and people became very ignorant and, almost as a matter of course, very wicked. But Brethren, when a whole nation or sect, falls into such a state its views respecting good and evil become confounded; wickedness is not seen in all its native deformity, nor reprobated as it ought to be even by the good. Of this we have a sad example in this country. All, who call themselves Christians, here have learned *through our instrumentality*, that God's word declares all liars shall be cast into hell and that the devil was a liar from the beginning: and yet all classes of the people not only Heathens, but also Papists and Syrians, are in the habit of grossly lying; and the best among them think it not a very great evil. In ancient days similar bad practices prevailed in the Christian Church. People, yea in other respects, good people, thought they

might commit evil to bring about good : for this purpose they frequently wrote feigned histories under false names, by which they often did much harm instead of good. Of this allow me to adduce one example; you and I acknowledge Mar Ephraim to have been a good man; and yet living in the days of general ignorance, he was so far led astray by the force of bad example, as to be induced to write a false and very stupid book, without thinking such a proceeding criminal. But by the aid of this very work the impostor Mahomed was assisted in composing his false *Védam*—the Koran. But such practices were common among ancient Christian writers; on which account many of their statements are doubtful, and none ought to be admitted except upon mature deliberation. Let us however, for argument's sake, admit that to the best of their knowledge, the ancient Fathers wrote according to the truth: but upon examination you will find that the truth could not, generally speaking, be so clearly ascertained in those days as in ours: for in former times, the art of printing was unknown,—all their books were in manuscript, and therefore very dear, and in copying liable to numerous mistakes: on these accounts important affairs that were transacted in one place, were

often unknown in another; and valuable writings being both scarce and expensive, were extremely difficult to obtain. From these and other concurring causes, few men, with even good natural abilities, were learned; and therefore what they wrote was more frequently in accordance with their uninformed notions than in conformity to the truth. But now, by means of the press, books are multiplied,—learning is encouraged,—and information soon flies from one end of the earth to the other; in consequence of which, as you may witness in your own land, the young have more knowledge than the aged, and children are better taught than their Doctors and priests. This is not to be wondered at, for learned men have extracted the essence from the ancient writings and printed it for the benefit of the unlearned: so that we can now learn all that is worth knowing from the best books that have been written from the time of Christ to the present.

But Brethren, what is it we are to learn from the writings of the Fathers? Some will reply the right faith and practice of the Christian Church. Now respecting what ought to be the practice of the Church, with regard to outward rites I have already offered a few explanatory remarks: but let us inquire upon what the faith

and doctrine of the Christian Church are established. *They are, or ought to be, built upon the word of God:* but we have the word of God in our hands, and therefore while we may not despise the writings of the Fathers; we ought not to estimate them above their value. If in matters of faith and doctrine they agree with the word of God, receive them: if otherwise they ought to be rejected as worthless. Brethren, be not deceived by what people tell you of ancient writings and traditions; nor need you trouble yourselves about them: you have the fountain—the word of God, adhere to the truth as that teaches you, and pray in Christ's name, that the Holy Spirit may assist you to cordially embrace and obey it, then your walk through this world will be happy,—your end peace,—and your everlasting state blessedness in heaven.

